

# Revolt and Revolutions: Un voyage à Paris — by Ione Houston

As I glanced around, all I could see was chaos. A glass bottle struck my head with a thud, causing me to collapse to the ground. I tried to cushion the impact of the fall with my hands, but I failed. My head echoed with pain, and then, everything faded into darkness.

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It was a warm and sunny day in July of 2027, and I had just graduated high school. To mark the occasion, my parents offered me the chance to choose any destination for a vacation, and without hesitation, I picked Paris. As we embarked on our first full day in the city, we made our way to the Musee d'Orsay, a museum known for its collection of sculptures and photography. The day had been filled with beautiful art and unforgettable moments, but little did I know that a turn of events would soon bring my day into darkness.

Paris was truly a sight for my eyes. As we strolled along the main road in search of a cozy cafe after a day filled with sightseeing, I found myself amazed by the city's architecture. Suddenly, something caught my attention from the corner of my eye—a smidge of movement in one of the nearby alleyways. Intrigued, I turned my gaze and spotted a kitten playing in a small cardboard box. Although I had a lingering sense of caution, an urge prompted me to investigate further. I felt an unexplainable connection to the small cat, so I ventured into the alley. However, as soon as I moved closer, the kitten became startled and ran off in fear.

I found myself unable to resist the urge to follow the kitten, despite being fully aware that it might not be the best decision. Full of curiosity, I quickened my pace and followed the cat, wanting to uncover where it was going. "What are you doing out here all alone?" I called out. At that moment, the thought of returning to my family and their potential concern for where I was never once crossed my mind.

**Eh, who cares, I have a phone either way.**

As I focused intently on the cat, staying low to the ground to make sure it didn't slip away from my view, I suddenly collided with something. Startled, I found myself bumping into a person, and I quickly looked up to offer my apologies, feeling sorry for the unintentional collision. It was then that I realized I had lost track of the little cat.

In my attempts to find the cat once more, I searched the cobblestone streets around me, but the little thing was nowhere to be found. As I looked around, I realized that I had no clue where I was. Feeling disheartened, I reached into my back pocket to grab my phone and call my parents, only to find that it wasn't there. So now, not only had I lost the cat, but I had also lost my phone. Angered by this turn of events, I suddenly became aware that when I bumped into the person, their drink had spilled all over me, leaving me drenched in what seemed to be the scent of wine. I couldn't help but wonder, **what had this day come to?**

I surveyed my surroundings in search of a bathroom or somewhere to clean myself up, when I noticed a train station nearby. Maybe I could approach an attendant there and ask to use a phone after cleaning off.

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I entered the station and immediately located a sign pointing to the restrooms. Looking at the dried stains on my clothes in the mirror, I quickly grabbed some paper towels from the dispenser, hoping to blot out some of the liquid from my shirt and pants before they had fully dried and left a stain. Reaching into my weekend bag, I searched for my Tide pen, which I knew I had packed. After a few minutes of trying to remove the stain, I accepted that my attempts were not working and I resorted to searching for a phone. As I passed back through the same bathroom door I had entered moments ago, I was taken aback by what I saw. It was almost as if I couldn't believe my eyes.

As I took a closer look at my surroundings, it felt as if I had been transported into a scene from an old movie. The transit station had undergone a complete change in appearance, seeming as though it didn't belong in our time. I walked around and began to notice details I had previously not seen like how everyone seemed to be dressed in unusual attire, with strange hats and accessories that seemed out of place in the modern world.

My first thought was to ask someone if I was even correct in my thoughts about where and *when* I am. I walked up to one of the ticket booths to see if I could ask a worker what was going on. "Excuse me, where exactly am I?"

“Quel genre de question est ce? Vous êtes à Paris bien sûr!” *What kind of question is that? You’re in Paris of course!*

**No way...** I thought to myself. **How is this possible?**

**How could I suddenly understand French? What’s going on?**

I silently thanked the ticket attendant and turned away, still in awe of the surreal experience. Suddenly, a wave of dizziness washed over me, and the world around me appeared strangely blurry. I reached for my face, making sure that my glasses were in place, ruling out that as the cause. **What's happening?** Panic began to set in as I started thinking about what if I got hurt here, what would happen to me when I eventually went back. My vision got so bad that I couldn't even see my hands in front of me, and then everything went dark.

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I woke up confused. **What exactly just happened? Where am I now, or better yet, when am I?** I push myself up off of the ground and look at my surroundings. I thought I was back in 2027, but that makes me think, was what just happened all just a dream? **Did I actually just time travel? If I did why did I?** I had so many questions, but I knew they would most likely go unanswered. **I need to find my family!** That was my next thought. I walked out of the station, confusion probably still on my face. Looking outside, it all seemed normal, like nothing even happened in the first place. Like I didnt just f\*cking time travel!!!!

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I tried to retrace my steps from when I was chasing the kitten, but I couldn't recall which alley I had come from. As I wandered through the streets of Paris, I began to feel tired. Nearly two hours had passed since I had last seen my family, and with each passing moment, I felt more and

more hopeless. I contemplated giving up, feeling lost in the city. I finally found myself sitting on the worn curb of the cobblestone road, looking at the fading light of day. It was then that I noticed a soft glow to my right. With nightfall approaching, the light of the glow stood out. I squinted at a faint, winding path ahead. Looking around, I expected to see someone else sharing this strange experience, but there was no one in sight. Today had been filled with unexplainable things, and I couldn't shake the feeling of uncertainty. Everything seemed surreal, and I was left questioning if any of this was even real. I couldn't help but wonder what this journey had come to. **Where even was everyone?**

As I rose to my feet, I glanced around once more, before following the glowing path. With careful yet determined steps, I followed the trail, my mind racing with questions about where it came from and what its purpose was. It felt unreal, almost as if I had stumbled into a scene from a video game.

Walking more and more while still following the trail, I could see the glowing haze getting brighter, till it led me to a dead-end, a plain old brick wall. Looking down at the road, I saw a piece of stone that looked odd, and out of place. Stepping on it, I heard a click. Then I heard shifting, and all of a sudden, the wall in front of me was twisting, revealing a pedestal of sorts, with a peculiar bag perched atop it.

Right when I pulled the bag off the place it resided and put it over my left shoulder, I felt the same dizziness I had felt previously. **I think I'm transporting back. This can't be happening, not again.**

I could feel my surroundings getting fuzzy again and it was just like earlier today when I was in the train station, except this time it was somewhat different. I felt the same blurring as before, and then, it all went black.

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I woke up, knowing I was back when I was at the transit station. Looking around, I saw the same alleyway as before, except it looked older, and dated. I remember I grabbed that bag, so I decided to check what was in the mysterious thing. Pulling it off my shoulder I noticed how heavy it was. I unzipped the opening of the bag and checked inside, what I found in there just confused me even more. In the distance, I heard some loud shouts and bangs but I thought nothing of it. The first thing I pulled out was some strange gas-mask looking thing. Searching further in, there were more strange items. Like a pair of shoes that looked like my grandma would wear when she was younger, or for some reason a pocket knife. I wondered where this bag even came from. **Why did I come across it?**

Just then, I heard the shouts and yells growing closer. The curiosity inside me said I should follow what I was hearing. Still disoriented from the transport, I stumbled a bit as I walked back down the road while following the noise. As I follow the loud yelling, it seems as though the shouts were acts of violence, rather than joy and excitement, and *definitely* more than one person. Getting worried, I sped up my pace as I continued to get closer to the loud noises. Then I heard a loud bang, followed by screams of civilians. By now I started running, chasing the screams. And then I saw it, the big commotion going on. It looked like some kind of riot or sorts, with thousands of people. I could see policemen arresting people, buildings being smashed in with

cobblestone bricks thrown at them, stampedes of people, and other violent acts being done by both authorities *and* civilians.

“DESCENDRE!!” *GET DOWN* I heard someone shout right next to my ear, sending a blast through my eardrums. Then, a glass bottle made harsh contact with my head. As I tumbled to the ground, I reached out, hoping to cushion the impact with my hands. The ringing in my head grew to an unbearable impact, and a wash of dizziness came over me. It was at that moment, consciousness had slipped away from me.

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As I slowly awoke, a woman's urgent voice cleared my head. "Réveille-toi! Réveille-toi!!" *Wake up, wake up!* She exclaimed. My head throbbed with a headache, unlike any I had experienced before. "Pouvez-vous m'entendre?" *Can you hear me?* She asked. I propped myself up on my elbows, my legs extended out in front of me, then nodded in response. "Ne t'inquiète pas, tu es en sécurité ici," *Don't worry, you are safe here.* She reassured me. As my vision cleared, I focused on the woman who was speaking to me. She had a fair complexion, long slightly wavy black hair, and delicate freckles adorning her nose and cheeks. Her eyes were large and expressive, framed by long eyelashes. I gazed at her, unsure of what to say. "Who are you, and where am I right now? How did I get here?" I fired off questions, eager for answers. "Woah là, ralentis," *Woah there, slow down.* She responded. "Je m'appelle Juliette. Vous êtes actuellement dans une bibliothèque, campant ici avec les autres." *My name is Juliette. You are currently in a library, camping here with the others.* She explained.

"The others?" I said with a puzzled expression on my face, which I'm sure the so-called Juliette noticed because the next thing she said was this— "Les personnes blessées lors des émeutes ont

été amenées ici par d'autres étudiants. Vous êtes étudiant, n'est-ce pas?" *Those injured in the riots were brought here by other students. You are a student, aren't you?* **What was she talking about?** I wondered to myself. Just at that moment, a deafening bang shattered the calmness of the room, triggering panic and chaos throughout. The doors of the library blasted open with an ear-splitting crash, and a cloud of gas began to flood the room. Cries of the trapped library visitors echoed through the air, overwhelming my senses. I was paralyzed in fear as I saw the unfolding nightmare, but then I saw Juliette's hand reach out in front of me. I gripped it tightly as she pulled me up from the floor where I was huddled. I struggled to breathe in the smoke-filled room.

As I stumbled through the chaos, guided by Juliette, I felt the smoke filling my lungs, causing me to violently cough. She led me towards the back exit of the building, pounding on the door to lead us to safety, amid the chaotic shouts of the police on the other side. In a moment of panic, I remembered the mysterious bag I had come across earlier, which contained a gas mask. My heart sank when I realized it was missing from my shoulder. "Juliette! My bag! I need to go back and get it!!!!" I cried out. "Laissez le sac! Nous devons être à nouveau en sécurité, Il n'y a pas de temps pour ça!!" *Leave the bag! We need to get to safety again, there's no time for that!* Juliette replied, her voice filled with urgency.

As I followed her lead, we hurried through the backstreets of Paris, desperate to find a safe place for what I prayed would be the final time. The narrow, winding alleys made me feel increasingly nauseous. **Not again...** I thought to myself. We paused briefly to catch our breath, the distant cries of fellow citizens still echoing in our ears. My vision began to blur once more, a familiar



sensation creeping over me. "I need to rest," I told Juliette, grasping her shoulder for support.

"Nous n'avons pas le temps pour ça, nous devons y aller!" *We don't have time for that, we need to go!* she insisted. Ignoring her demanding words, I sank to the ground, trying to return my sight to normal, but all I could see before me were indistinct shapes and colors. Juliette murmured something near my ear, but I couldn't make out the words. Then, the world around me shifted, becoming unrecognizable, and I realized I had no idea what would come next. It was at that moment that my consciousness slipped into darkness.

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As I opened my eyes, the faint light of dawn revealed that I was in the same narrow alleyway where I first encountered the kitten. Daylight flooded the alley, and I couldn't help but wonder how much time had passed. **Had I been unconscious for an entire day?** I questioned myself. Suddenly, I noticed a subtle movement from the corner of my eye. I turned my head to see the very same cat that had initiated these interesting events. It gazed at me, tilted its head in a manner that seemed almost mischievous, winked, and then strolled away. Shaking my head in disbelief, I sighed and stood up, dusting off my clothes, realizing only then that they were covered in dirt and debris. As I got to my feet, I spotted my weekend bag resting nearby. I couldn't imagine how it had ended up there. Opening the clasp, I was surprised to find my phone waiting inside.

Feeling a bit unsteady from the recent events that had occurred, I scanned my surroundings, my senses still recovering from the journey I had experienced. With my bag slung over my shoulder and my phone clutched in my hand, I made my way onto the busy main road, seamlessly blending into the crowd of people as I searched for my family I had lost all that time ago.